

Crystal Cove

State Park



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

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by the Crystal Cove Alliance
and the Irvine Ranch Conservancy.

Discover the many states of California.™

Crystal Cove State Park

8471 N. Coast Highway

Laguna Beach, CA 92651

(949) 494-3539

www.crystalcovestatepark.com

*The ocean and shoreline,
visible from nearly all points
along Pacific Coast Highway,
dominate the coastal portion
of the park. From the high
ridges above Moro Canyon,
visitors enjoy an expansive
view of the ocean,
the interior valleys
and the mountain ranges
beyond.*

Crystal Cove State Park's rolling surf, wide sandy beaches, tide pools, gently sloping hills, and deeply wooded canyons and ridges provide a delightful contrast to its urban surroundings. Located off busy Pacific Coast Highway between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach, Crystal Cove is one of Orange County's largest remaining examples of open space and natural seashore.

The park's Mediterranean climate is characterized by moist, foggy summer mornings, with the fog burning off by midmorning to bring warm, sunny days and cool evenings.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

For over nine thousand years the native people established villages in El Moro Canyon near two natural springs. Their food sources included fish from the kelp beds and surf zones, waterfowl, and a variety of plants and animals. The prehistoric people developed a number of specialized crafts and tools including nets, fishhooks, basketry, stone implements, ritual objects, and tule canoes.

With the arrival of Spanish missionaries, the native people were drawn into the mission system. At Mission San Gabriel and Mission San Juan Capistrano their way of life changed with the introduction of new religious and agricultural practices.

Rancho San Joaquin

After José Andrés Sepulveda acquired land from the Mexican government in 1836, Mission San Juan Capistrano's grazing area

became known as "Rancho San Joaquin." With the assistance of a Native American workforce, Sepulveda used Moro Canyon's seasonal pastures for cattle grazing. After 1850, a run of bad luck along with land title complications pushed Sepulveda into debt. He sold Rancho San Joaquin in 1864.

The Irvine Ranch Company

Three northern California ranchers and San Francisco financier James Irvine purchased the rancho and stocked it with thousands of sheep. In 1876 Irvine bought out his partners when ranching failed due to droughts, wool infestations, and competitive markets. After Irvine's death in 1886, sheep ranching continued as other ranching activities developed.

James Irvine II inherited the ranch from his father and diversified the agricultural business by leasing land to tenant farmers. He incorporated his land holdings and created "The Irvine Company" on June 4, 1894.

Japanese Farmers

Beginning in 1927 Japanese farmers leased land from The Irvine Company and built homes, barns, and a community center known as "Laguna Beach Language School" (a building now preserved within the Historic District). Planting hundreds of acres of crops, they sold produce from roadside stands and to Los Angeles markets.

Life changed dramatically during World War II when the Japanese community was sent to an internment camp in Poston, Arizona. As a result, they forever lost their farms and homes along the Crystal Cove hills.

Laura Davick Collection courtesy of Phyllis Parker Lowe



Just as in the 1940s, Crystal Cove has something for everyone.

Although Japanese farmers did not return to the area, agriculture and ranching practices continued into the 1970s. Over the years, The Irvine Company leased their land for farming, equestrian use and cattle grazing. During the early days of park ownership, these activities ended in order to enhance natural preservation and public recreation.

Crystal Cove

The Irvine Company also leased the coastal area to filmmakers and vacationers. Palm-thatched structures emerged at Crystal Cove, serving as both tropical movie backdrops and beach cottage rentals.

Beginning in the 1920s, people traveled the new Pacific Coast Highway to spend their free time at the beach. The Cove soon became a popular destination to pitch a tent or rent a cottage. By the late 1930s, The Irvine Company limited the development of the area to the current 46 cottages. In time, long-term leases were made, tent camping was eliminated, and the Crystal Cove community became a private beach.

The community was placed on the National Register of Historic Places for its unique vernacular architecture in 1979, the same year The Irvine Company sold this land to the State of California. The cottages are now being restored by California State Parks for public use and enjoyment.



Historic District

El Moro Beach and Canyon

“Tyron’s Camp” (a café, auto camp, and tent campground) opened during the 1920s along the beach and inland at El Moro canyon. In the late 1950s the complex evolved into a seasonal trailer destination known as “El Morro Beach Trailer Park.” Later, about 300 permanent manufactured homes replaced seasonal beach trailers in this area. After resident tenants’ leases expired in 2005, the trailers were removed in order to develop a public campground and day-use facility.



Live Oak

NATURAL HISTORY

Coastal Strand

The sandy beach is 3.2 miles long, bordered by hardy, fleshy-leaved and deep-rooted plants growing low against salt-sprayed dunes. At low tide, tide pools are exposed along the rocky shoreline.

Coastal Bluffs

At high tides the surf laps against the base of 80-foot bluffs. There are two bluff-top public parking areas, Reef Point and Pelican Point, that offer access to the beach.

Flora

The park has several distinct plant communities—specific habitats with conditions that favor some types of plants and animals over others.

Coastal Sage Scrub

Widespread throughout the park, this dense shrub community occurs across the coastal terrace, along the sides of lower Moro Canyon, and extensively in upper Moro Canyon, especially on the canyon’s damper north-facing reaches. The resinous, highly flammable vegetation regenerates quickly after burning.

Annual Grasses

These introduced grasses grow extensively on the terraces and to a lesser extent in lower Moro Canyon.

Southern Riparian Woodland

Along the small watershed represented by seasonal Moro Creek, sycamore, oak (including a specimen of a hybridized version of oak) and willows occur. Undergrowth includes elderberry shrubs.



Fauna

The wildlife in the intertidal areas of the park includes purple shore crabs, sea hares and sea anemones. At higher levels, including the bluffs and terraces, ground squirrels, cottontail rabbits, western fence lizards, California

king snakes, California gnatcatchers, California quail and deer are found. The park's open

space areas offer habi-

tat for deer mice,

coyotes, bobcats,

roadrunners,

gopher snakes,

western toads,

red-tail hawks,

California

thrashers, and

two species of

rattlesnakes.

RECREATION

Backcountry

Primitive Camp-

ing

There is a fairly strenuous 3-mile, uphill hike to three separate camping areas.

Campers must pack in and out all of their supplies, including water.

Backcountry Trails

There is access to 2,400 undeveloped acres from the Moro Canyon parking lot. The trails are open to hiking, biking and equestrian use. Maps are available at the ranger station.

No smoking or open flames in the backcountry. No dogs in the backcountry.

Beach Activities

There are seven separate coves along the 3.2

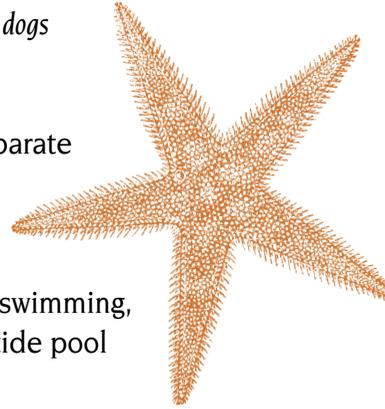
miles of beach,

offering spec-

tacular sunbathing, swimming,

surfing, diving and tide pool

exploring.



SPECIAL EVENTS

The park welcomes special events including weddings, picnics, parties and film shoots. For more information visit www.crystalcove-tatepark.com.

LODGING AND FOOD SERVICES

The park's concession partner, the Crystal Cove Alliance, provides both food and overnight lodging services at The Beachcomber Café, Crystal Cove Shake Shack, and Crystal Cove Beach Cottages. For more information, visit www.crystalcovealliance.org and www.thebeachcombercafe.com.

MOVIES MADE AT CRYSTAL COVE

1918

Treasure Island

1920

The Sea Wolf

1923

Stormswept

1927

The Wreck of the Hesperus

1928

Sadie Thompson

Half a Bride

*White Shadows
in the South Seas*

1929

The Isle of Lost Ships

1932

Rain

1934

Treasure Island

1938

The Great Heart

1944

To Have and Have Not

1951

Two of a Kind

1974

Herbie Rides Again

1985

The Creator

1988

Beaches



WATER SAFETY TIPS

- **Swim with a friend**—Supervise children closely—flotation devices are not reliable.
- **Water use areas**—Swimming, surfing and kayaking zones are separate from each other; check to make sure your activity is taking place in the proper zone. Contact park staff for additional beach safety information.
- **Rip currents**—If you become caught in a rip current, relax, swim parallel to the shore until the pull stops, and then swim back to shore. If you are unable to return to the beach, tread water and signal for assistance.
- **Avoid spinal injuries**—Do not dive headfirst into unfamiliar waters.
- **Be alert**—Never turn your back on the ocean. Sudden waves can sweep you away from shore or tide pool areas.



1920s Cottage 13 used in the movie, "Beaches" (1988)

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Picnicking—There are accessible picnic areas and restrooms throughout the park on both the coastal and inland areas. Refer to the park map.

Trails—The paved coastal multi-use trail is an accessible path along coastal bluffs. It offers wildlife and scenic viewing with occasional interpretive displays.

Beach/shore access—Accessibility to the beach is at the Crystal Cove Historic District and El Moro Beach.

Exhibits and programs—The park visitor centers at El Moro and the Historic District are generally accessible.

Food/Lodging Services—Concession operation facilities provide accessibility.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- **Huntington State Beach**, Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) at Beach Blvd. (Highway 39), (714) 536-1454
- **Doheny State Beach**, off Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) at Dana Point Harbor at Del Obispo St., (949) 496-6171



Cottage 15, now the Beachcomber Cafe

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Park hours are 6:00 a.m. to sunset, daily, year round (Historic District, 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.).
- Possession of alcohol is prohibited throughout the park except at the Beachcomber Cafe.
- Dogs must be kept on a leash no more than 6 feet long. They may be walked on paved areas only. Dogs are not permitted on the beach or in the backcountry and must not be left unattended.
- All tide pool specimens are protected by State law. Collection of shells and rocks is prohibited.
- All natural, cultural and historical park resources are protected.
- Stay on established trails. Children and pets should be closely supervised.
- Do not climb on or approach the cliff faces—they are unstable and can collapse under you.
- No fires are allowed on or in the sand. Hibachis or barbecues are permitted —gas canister type only. Wood or charcoal is not permitted. No open flames are permitted in the backcountry.
- A permit is required for back-country hike-in campsites. Contact www.reserveamerica.com.

